

The Chronicle

of the Early American Industries Association, Inc.

Volume X

June, 1957

Number 2

THE INDIAN BROOM

BY LAURENCE A. JOHNSON

One of the earliest American industries in New York and New England in the early 19th century was that of making the birch-split broom. It is generally believed that the method of manufacture was taught to the white man by the Indians. The "injun" brooms, as they were called, soon became popular with settlers in the north and were a source of added income to those who had the patience and industry to whittle them out.

The General Stores would accept them as barter since these brooms were in demand not only by many of the stores' own customers but also in large cities. The prevailing price paid by the stores was from six to eight cents. It would take at least three evenings or all day to make a good "Injun" broom. Just how long they continued to be an article of barter is not clear.

Some time ago the writer came into possession of over a hundred day books, ledgers, cash and inventory books that were in an old general store in Turin, New York. The first is a day book of Roland Clapp who, as it is entered in the day book "A", started his venture January 1, 1816. Unfortunately there are many "skips" in their continuity. For example, I have Clapp's daybooks A, C, and E, but B and D are missing. The last entry in book "E" is Tuesday, August 11, 1818. Then follows a long "skip" to an inventory book that begins with the inventory of Ozias Wilcox dated April 30, 1833.

In daybooks "C" and "E" there are many charges for brooms at a shilling and six pence regarded thus: "1/6: extension 19 cents."

On Wednesday the 27th of May, 1818 is this interesting charge in day book "E", page 143:

"Jonathan Bush	Dr	
"To 1 pr Sheep Shears	3/6	44
"To 1 Indian Broom	1/6	19
"To 1 Corn Do	3/-	38
"To 1 pocket Knife	4/-	50
	I	51

This would seem to indicate that a second theory on split broom manufacture, that they were the product of early Swedish and Dutch settlers and the technique was taught to the English, is not true. Here is positive proof that the split-broom was also called "Indian".

It is my belief that the numerous brooms charged at 19 cents in these daybooks were the split or Indian broom.

The first inventory in the above mentioned book is that of Ozias Wilcox, 16 pages of 40 items per page, value \$1,519.70 with no mention of brooms. The next inventory is that of the E. B. Holden Company which had bought out Wilcox, dated May 6, 1837. Page 15 lists: 5 Split Brooms at 42 cents and 7 Corn Do 22 1.54.

The E. B. Holden Company on April 9, 1838 took inventory and on page 17 entered the following:

"7 Split Brooms	8/	56
-----------------	----	----

- - -

"3 Corn Brooms	16/	48
----------------	-----	----

Here the description of the broom is made, Split and Corn. The same description as given in the charge to Jonathan Bush mentioned before. Holden's next inventory is dated April 9, 1839 and lists "2 Brooms 8/ 16."

The next inventory is that of Wilcox and Holden dated June 15, 1840. On page 21 nine brooms are listed:

4 brooms at 1/6	(18½ cents) each
1 broom at 1/3	(15½ cents) each
4 brooms at 2/6	(31 cents) each.

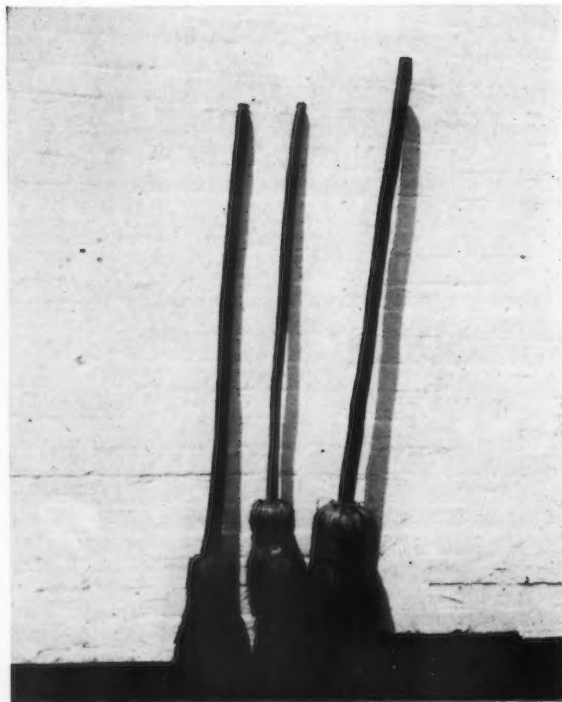
It might be well to mention that in the early days of the Republic the shilling of the state of New York had a value of twelve and one half cents or 8 to the dollar. Values differed in some of the other states. For example in Massachusetts their shilling was 6 to the dollar or valued at sixteen and 2/3 cents. The practice of using the shilling mark in pricing articles in the day books of many country stores continued long after the currency was changed.

The next day book is that of E. B. Holden & Company from September 27 through April 16, 1838. Then there is another "skip" to the day book of Holden and Moore, October 19, 1840 through July 7, 1842. In these two day books the only brooms entered are priced at 31 cents.

The wholesale price of brooms in the 1840 inventory and the price of brooms at retail in the two last mentioned day books seem to indicate that these are corn brooms and that in this store in Turin, at least, the day of the Indian split broom was over.

A glance at "Handbook 15, New York Museum, *The Community Industries of the Shakers*, throws some

The Chronicle



Author's Collection — Largest broom is 54 inches.

light on Shaker broom manufacture at the end of the 18th century: "... The Shakers at Watervliet are credited with the first colony to raise broom corn and manufacture brooms. This was in 1798. It is claimed that Theodore Bates of this community invented the so-called flat broom as contrasted with the earlier round broom and brush" ... "By 1805 at least the broom industry at New Lebanon was in full swing, and brooms and brushes were delivered to Albany, Boston and Hudson. . . . " "... The variation in price indicates that there may have been differences in Quality or that large and small brooms came in different sizes. . . . " "... On September 15, 1808 Nathan went to Providence with merchandise and returned with a load of broom corn. By this year brooms were selling at from 30 to 50 cents a piece. . . . " "... One lot of 32 brooms was delivered in Albany in September 1809 for about 16 cents a piece. In 1810 five "splinter" brooms sold for a total of 70 cents." The splinter brooms mentioned are no doubt the split-broom or Indian broom. The reference in the "Handbook" to broom sizes, could explain the difference in prices quoted on brooms in the 1840 Holden & Moore inventory.

These industrious Shakers not only sold their brooms to the stores wholesale but had peddling carts all over the country selling their products from house to house and the new flat corn brooms were not the only new item that they introduced to the American consumer.

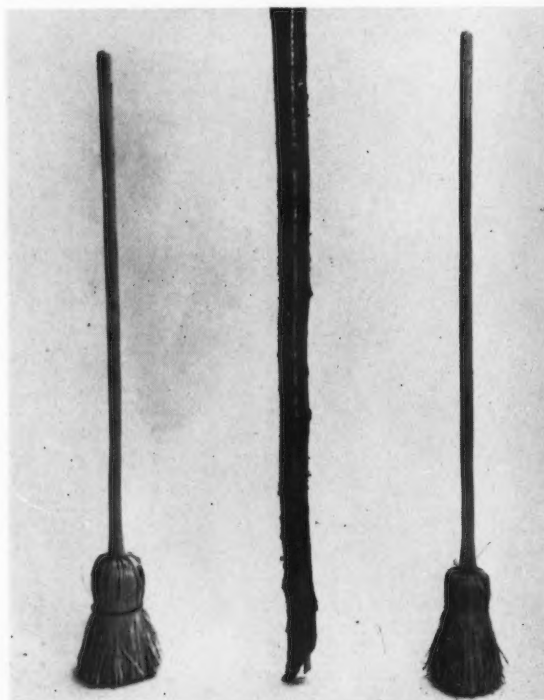
I have a few of the old Injun brooms that were picked up many years ago and have seen none offered for sale in the last few years. However, upon a recent visit to my good friend, Charles Foster who operates a fine antique shop at Palatine Bridge, New York, I was

astonished to see a display of freshly whittled Indian brooms for sale. Poor Charlie, he could not get rid of me until he told me about the old broom maker and where he could be found.

One bright sunny morning in March, found us driving north out of Fonda, New York, through Gloversville on route 148. Just before reaching Maysfield, we took a left turn into the Jackson Summit Road and we were headed towards the Adirondacks. After climbing upward on this winding mountainous dirt road for about two miles, the car stopped at a scene that reminds one of an old Currier and Ives print. Nestled in the forest that over-looked beautiful Sacandaga Reservoir below, was the log cabin of the broom maker and his wife. A rap at the door of the cabin and we met Mrs. Yorks. She asked us in and introduced her husband Mr. Andrew J. Yorks, who was resting on the bed, which was made up as a day bed. This 82 year old craftsman donned a jacket and opened his little shop adjacent to the cabin. He apologized for the "looks of things" as he had had an operation for the removal of his appendix two weeks previous, and "had to take it a little easy"

Mr. Yorks said that he was born on the west branch of the Neversink, Denning Ulster County, New York and had come to these foothills of the Adirondack 38 years ago as a lime-wood cutter. He had worked in the kilns that supplied lime to the leather workers at nearby Gloversville, and later became a stone mason. He told of building this fine log-cabin twenty-five years ago, from the native spruce that grew in the forest back of his

(Continued on Page 24)



Birch — split brooms made by Mr. York and a 46½ inch birch sapling. One broom is 36½ inches long, the other 38 inches.

Early American Industries

THE LOWLY RAKE

Page 15

BY ELOISE STEDMAN MYERS

When the first settlers arrived in this country, wood was plentiful, even in their backyards. These pioneers naturally used this material close at hand to fashion their homes, furnishings, utensils and implements so necessary for producing their food or earning a livelihood. Many of these men had been skilled artisans in their native land. And so the pioneer with his Old World skill and his own resourcefulness, fashioned from wood for his particular needs the rake, hoe, shovel or fork. One of the first requirements of the General Court for establishing new townships in Massachusetts was that a settler should improve at least five acres of the home lot, by planting it to English grass. This injunction created an immediate need for these hand agricultural implements.

One can trace the use of the hand rake for centuries. In the sixteenth century it is shown in the Dutch engraving, "Spring" by Petrusa Marica being used in the Royal gardens and again about 1570 in an engraving by Miller, "Woman With A Rake". In Thomas Lodge's story, "Rosalind" (1558-1625), Saladin, the elder brother, threatens his brother, Rosader. "This made Rosader half mad, then stepping to a great rake that stood in the garden, he laid such a load upon his brother's men that he hurt some of them, and made the rest of them run away."

Too, this early hand implement played a varied part in the history of New England. An old record tells the story of Levi Hubbard, known as the "Smashing" member of the Massachusetts General Court. Being ostracized from the Court he fled into what is now Rhode Island, sold a rake to a savage who used it to dig clams. Naturally, the implement came apart. "Accompanied by his squaw the savage appeared demanding retribution. The discussion became a battle of words and grunts. At the crucial moment "Levi" let go with the stone hammer he held in his hand, catching the Indian square in the belly and bowling him over backward into a clump of bayberries. The squaw pitched a tomahawk in defense of her lord's good name, her aim was perfect. "That was the last of "Levi", and all because of a Rake.

During the early 1800's New England and New York state villages and towns each boasted its rake shop which usually turned out handles for other small tools as well. It was as much a part of the community as was the "smithy". We even find our "Rakevilles", part of a township, but a small community in itself. Connected with these rake shops were always the sawmills, many with their up and down saws powered by an overshot waterwheel.

In the days of the colonists a tool, no matter how crude, was cherished and appreciated. Many of these old rakes show ingenious methods of repair, just as one finds ingenious designs to fit local requirements. The windrow rake is interesting, with head on an angle, teeth projecting both sides of the head, making for ease in using a sweeping motion either from left or right, as the hayer raked or swept his cut hay into windrows, later to be forked or raked into cocks. The drak or bull rake,

designed for marsh or wet meadow hay, was fashioned somewhat on the order of the early hand reaper. Large, heavy, awkward-looking, a man needed to acquire the knack or swing necessary to work with ease and speed. Another crude wood rake, designed for charcoaling, consisted of six or seven inch teeth placed about two inches apart in a short heavy head, with only a five foot handle. This was used to gather up the forest leaves and rake them to the pit where the collier's helper scattered them uniformly over the charcoal pit. One of the earliest rakes was the corn rake which differed in dimensions and construction in different localities. The general length was about four feet and the four inch teeth were usually of iron, set from one to two inches apart. From the first, even in Europe, the staple was the hay rake with its six foot eight inch handle, either cleft or split to fasten into the head, or with bows or dowels, driven through the handle then bent in a circular manner to enter the head and act as braces. About twelve wooden teeth were placed far apart in the head. In an Encyclopedia of Agriculture published in England 1831, it is stated, "The hay rake is usually made of willow that it may be light and easy to work. Sometimes the teeth are made to screw into the head and fasten with nuts, which prevents them dropping out in dry seasons."

Probably the latest improvement or design in wooden rakes was made by Marshall W. Stedman and Charles R. Myers in the early part of the twentieth century when they launched on the market the Stedman Improved Lawn Rake to compete with the Japanese bamboo rake just introduced into this country. This rake carried a second head well below the main or toothed head which bolted to the handle. Five straight braces or dowels on each side of the handle spread out fan-shape to connect the two heads. There were twenty-six teeth close together. This proved far more sturdy than the usual bowed rake. There is still a demand for this special wood rake in the northeastern markets.

It was this company who tried in vain to bolster the wooden rake business against the ever increasing inroads of the metal lawn comb and imported bamboo type of rake. But the "Old Order Changed, yielded place to new," until now only four companies remain to manufacture wood hand rakes, and those only as a side line.

One hundred years is not long in the life of a nation but is indeed, in the life of an industry owned by one family passing from father to son. Thus it seems fitting that this story of wood hand rake-making should include something of the origin and development of a small Berkshire craft during its picturesque age and decline.

About 1824 William Stedman, at Tyringham, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, was making a few wood rakes for the farmers in the neighboring towns among the hills of Berkshire. All his material was shaped with chisels and gouges on a lathe operated by a foot treadle. Being an enterprising young man of his day and of an inventive mind, William made and installed some crude

The Chronicle

machinery in his new shop which he built in that section of town known as "Sodom". In 1827 this was known as the most modern wood-working shop west of the Connecticut River. One of these machines which Stedman invented was for tapering rake teeth which principle is still used. This machine was continually used by three generations until it burned in the factory fire of 1926. Waters from Hop Brook furnished power for the machinery as well as for the up and down sawmill with its overshot water wheel. Relatives and neighbors came to work in this new factory. Farmers cut and hauled by oxen, the logs in exchange for rakes, forks or lumber.

At William's death, his eldest son, Martin V. B. Stedman, in 1870 took over, continuing in much the same manner only extending his market. From old documents one assumes Martin was as much interested in farming as in rakes. The country had recovered from the effects of the Civil War, there was a sudden demand for wooden hay rakes abroad. Five shops in Tyringham alone, began shipping rakes to Europe, among them Stedman's. Rakes were too bulky to transport as a finished product so they went "knocked-down". The separate parts, tied in bundles, were packed in wooden boxes. In order to reach Europe in time for haying, freight had to leave this country in the winter months. Old diaries tell of the deep snows and bad traveling when only oxen could haul the freight to the railroad in Lee, eight miles away. One item tells of a shortage of "stales" at the Stedman show, of how another supplied them with ten thousand "stales".

The term "stale" is an old English term for the handle — a contraction from the "rake's tail". The rake had a tail, head and teeth. Even as recent as 1943 a jobber in Boston ordered his rakes with "bent stales and oiled heads".

To the chagrin of his eldest son, Martin was forever behind with his orders, often closing shop for harvesting or planting. At the age of fourteen, this son, Marshall, began "peddling" the Stedman products, starting out early in the morning to be gone several days.

As early as 1835 Hudson, New York, forty miles away, was the center of commerce for the Berkshires. Wagons from all directions rattled over the roads leading into the town, among them Stedman's rake wagon. When the shad-blows along the streams and highways heralded the arrival of spring and the hordes of silvery herring, known as shad, were traveling in schools to the source of the fresh water rivers to spawn, the Stedman rake wagon traveled its route to Hudson with its load of "shad" rakes, returning to the Berkshires with a load of shad fish peddled along the way. Thus the cheapest grade of hay rakes became known as "shads".

Even after the advent of truck transportation, there was a special technique in loading rakes. Racks, similar to the old hay rack, with upright stakes along the outer sides placed about two feet apart were fastened on the wagon or truck. Rakes were tied in bundles of twelve, six facing six, interlocking the teeth. The opening through the bows were slipped over the stakes, handles braced against the opposite stake, alternating heads and handles on each stage, the whole tied securely with a rope.

By 1887 the old Sodom rake shop was closed and Marshall W. Stedman moved to the "hollow" or center of Tyringham to begin in earnest the manufacture of

rakes, adding ash sieves, crates of various kinds and lumber. An abandoned paper mill was converted to a rake factory again using waters from Hop Brook for the principal power.

Probably one of the chief reasons that this wood working craft survived so long in the same locality was the fact that special timber used in its manufacture was plentiful on the hillsides for miles around. Hickory and ash were the staple woods used although some maple, yellow birch and beech could be used in the cheaper grades. This company never used other than hickory for wooden bows as this was the only wood tough and limber enough to bend without steaming. Stedman and later his son-in-law, Myers, personally supervised the selection and cutting of hickory trees. The shag-bark variety, exposed to the north and west winds, was the toughest. Only the butt logs were used for bows. In fact Stedman built his reputation as the only producer of wood rakes who used hickory without steaming for bows.

Shortly after Marshall started his own business, a farmer brought some hickory logs to the yard. After bickering over the measurement which was offered, Stedman finally suggested they haul the load to the town scales and settle the question by weight rather than by measurement, which was done. As a result the custom of buying hickory by the pound was established, a cord weighing three tons. In 1927 Stedman declared he could show groves of hickory and ash that had been cut off three times in the previous one hundred years.

The use of ash for handles dates back to the first century A.D. It has been identified attached to an iron implement unearthed from a Roman settlement in England. It has always been considered the strongest and most reliable wood for this use. All ash in top grade handles was straight-grained and free from knots. Wood used in this business was worked from the tree to the finished product. After the first autumnal frosts a crew of eight or ten men went to the woods to cut sufficient timber for the year's business. A day's work was from six in the morning sometimes until eight or nine at night, for the teams came straggling in late. Often the timber lot was over the hills at a distance where the men had to be housed for the night and fed at the farm home. The cutting was closely supervised as exact lengths were required to be worked economically into the various members of the product. By 1920 trucks had replaced teams; a few lumbermen became versed in the logging process and gradually the timber was purchased direct from them. Among the older men there was always a nostalgia for that life in the woods during New England's Indian summer.

Due to inventions and improvements in horse-drawn hay rakes by 1900 the demand for hand hay rakes had decreased nearly fifty percent, but the demand for wood lawn rakes had more than offset the loss. During the "Gay-nineties" lawns had come in style. "The Celebrated Mortised Rake" appeared on the Stedman elaborate letter-head. This was considered stronger and an improvement over the doweled handle where it entered the shaped head. At that time and after, this company was the only one to manufacture the mortised rake.

After World War I a competitor began using a seamed hollow steel bow in place of his steamed ash bow.

(Continued on Page 19)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I wish to take this opportunity in *The Chronicle* to express my pleasure at the privilege that the Early American Industries Association has afforded me by electing me as their President at the Corning meeting. Please let me assure each and every one of you that I shall do my level best to meet the high standards set by our past presidents. I should also like to express my sincere belief that the meeting at Corning was one of our best. We had approximately one hundred people in attendance and this ranks well up as far as meetings of the Early American Industries Association is concerned. I wish also to thank Mr. John P. Fox, Manager of the Corning Glass Center, and the staff of that excellent organization for the fine meeting that they provided us and for the outstanding facilities of this meeting.

It is my desire during the coming year of my term of office to improve all of the areas within which our Association has interests. One of the most important areas is the project of identifying unknown tools and implements — Whatsits. I would like to call your attention to that Whatsit report contained in this issue of the *Chronicle* prepared by Mr. Miner J. Cooper, Windsor, New York. Mr. Cooper has done an excellent job in organizing a program for us and it is the responsibility of each member of the Early American Industries Association to insure that this program is a success. I hope that our Association will have the cooperation and help of each one of you in following the pattern established by Mr. Cooper's report. I would also like to extend my thanks to Mr. Cooper for the job he has done in organizing this program.

Elsewhere on the pages of *The Chronicle* you will find a short note prepared by the Editors in relation to our next meeting. Our meeting this fall will take place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday October 5, 6 and 7 at Winston Salem, North Carolina. The Host organization for this meeting is Old Salem, Incorporated. Mr. Robert Garvey, Jr., Executive Director of Old Salem, Inc., will be the member of that organization who will be responsible for co-ordinating our meeting. It is extremely important that the Association, to coin an old Air Force phrase, makes a "maximum effort" in relation to this meeting. Winston Salem will be the farthest geographical point in which we have attempted to have a meeting in relation to the membership of the Association. Two meetings in the past, one held at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan and one held at Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia were both outstanding meetings, but suffered because of the small attendance on the part of members of the Association. It is extremely important to the Association to have such annual meetings well attended if we are to plan interesting and informative visits for our group in the future. I am sure that Winston Salem will be an outstanding meeting in the long list of those which the organization has had and I must request that each of you try to arrange your schedules so that it would be possible for you to attend this program.

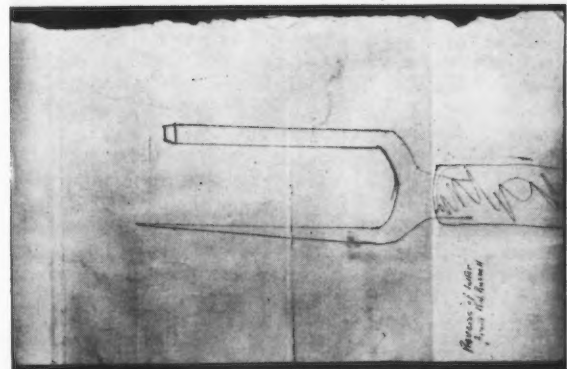
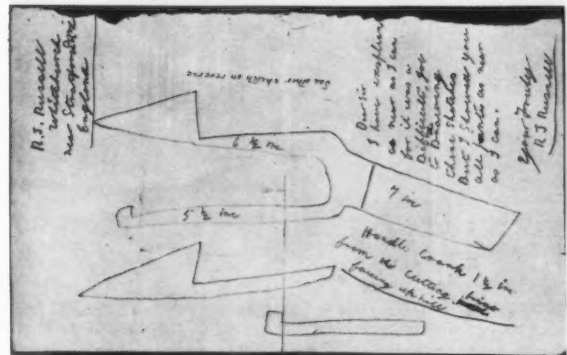
I also want to take this opportunity to welcome our new Directors in the Association and to assure each one that it is my sincere desire to work with them in making

(Continued on Page 20)

THE TWIBILL

In the October issue of *The Chronicle* Mr. Newton C. Brainard reported a common, but as he then assumed, obsolete tool called a twibill. His interest prompted him to contact a friend of his who was the President of The Collins Company, makers of axes and tropical tools, in Collinsville, Conn. An old employee of this company was stumped by the name "twibill" but upon receiving a description immediately exclaimed "Oh! You mean a Widget" and upon search found two rusty twibills, one of which, after grinding and polishing became the proud property of Mr. Brainard.

In the February 1956 issue of *The Chronicle* further comments on the tool were submitted by Mr. Brainard and Mr. Arthur Woodward, in which spelling of the name and its historical meaning were given. Soon after this Mr. Brainard went to England and was able to visit a Mr. Russell, owner of the tool mentioned. Mr. Brainard reports the following: "He not only courteously showed me the trevil but also mortised a hurdle post for me so that I might see how it was used. It was a unique tool, devised and used by his grandfather. It was made



Mr. Russell's Twibill — front and back view

The Chronicle

from an old file stock by the local smith. In form it was like an overgrown tuning fork with tines about six inches long, with a short wooden handle. The tines are about one and three quarters inches apart. One carries a spear point blade, sharpened on one side and the other is a blunt hook. (pictures 1 and 2.)

Hurdle posts are about four inches wide with mortises one half by two inches, made of green hazel. To make the mortises, holes are bored in the post just as in making a post and rail fence. Then, using the hooked end as a side guide, the blade is forced down in the end hole and levered to trim the side of the mortise. The tool is then reversed, starting in the opposite end hole and the second side cut. The hook, aside from its use as a guide, is only used to clean the waste from the hole. An ac-



The Lath-Splitter's Tools — Bowsaw, Cleaving Knife, Froes and Mallets (Edlin).

count of an early twibill tells of a similar hook. While the tool and the operation are crude it saves a lot of time for a man with a lot of hurdles to make. Mr. Russell said "it doubled his output".

We have found some interesting information concerning this tool, which is still being used today, that we would like to add to Mr. Brainards.

Historically, the making of hurdles is as old a wood working operation as any known in England and appears to be a southern counties development, for in parts of the North of England they are practically unknown. (Hartley, p103). A hurdle is a light movable fence used primarily for hurdling sheep and can be installed rapidly. They are sometimes used for race horses and for pigs. (Woods p118). The hurdle maker begins by sawing his wood to the lengths required for his rails and heads. He then quarters or clefts his wood with an interesting tool called a frommard. The word seems to mean 'from-ward', as the blade, set at right angles to the handle, cuts away from the hurdlemaker as he works the tool down the wood. (Pictures — #3 and #4). This tool is also known as a 'froe' and in Herefordshire as a *cleaving knife*. The quartered poles are now shaved, trimmed and pointed as required. The hurdle heads are thicker and squarer than the poles as they must be mortised with slots through which the bluntly pointed rail



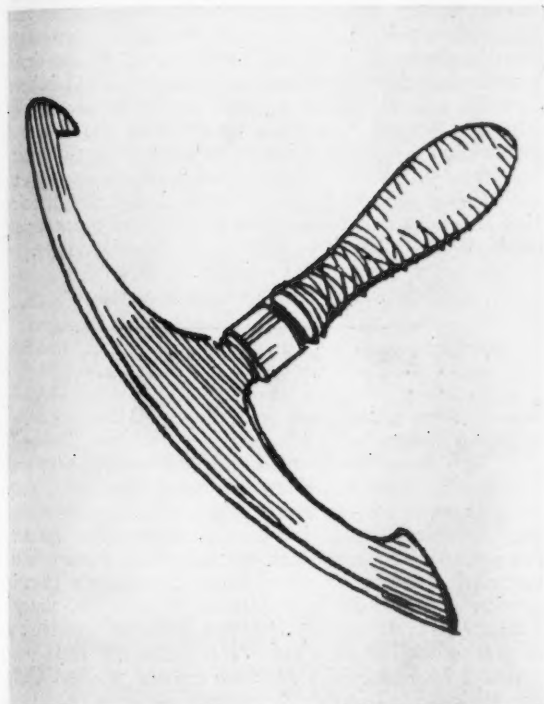
Trimming a cleft with the froe (Edlin).



The brace and bit is used to bore paired holes in the cleft stake (Edlin).

ends will be fixed. The lower is pointed to stick into the ground. (Woods, p. 18—Edlin, p. 950).

To mortise the hurdle-heads, so as to hold the cross-bars, each one is fixed in a peculiar frame or break called a *hurdler's monkey*, formed of two short upright posts bearing two cross-bars at slightly different levels, with a third upright appropriately set in the ground a short distance away, which grips the posts while two holes are drilled through it with a brace and bit to form the end of



Hurdle-maker's knife (Woods).

each mortice. (Edlin p95 — Woods 119) Frame may be seen in the lower right corner. (picture #5).

To drive out the intervening piece of wood between the holes various methods are used. A chisel and mallet or axe may be used, or our interesting tool the *Twibill*. This is called a *hurdler's knife* by Woods. (picture #6). She explains that the wood is cut away with the blade of the knife and the hook at the other end is used to pick out the wood. (Woods, p120.) (picture #7).

Edlin describes it as a hopper-shaped tool, called a *twivil*, *two-bill*, or *dader*, (a new name), having an axe-like blade at one end of its long head, and a hook at the other. After the strips of wood to be removed have been partially isolated by the broad blade, the hook is used to jerk it away and so complete the mortise hole. (Edlin p95).

In the picture note that it is similar as the one submitted by Mr. Brainard.

When the rails have been fixed into one hurdle-head, and the other has been knocked on, the hurdle is laid over a pattern, and the center-pieces and diagonal braces are nailed on with cut-nails. (Woods pp 120-121).



Then the wood between the two holes is cut out with the Twibill (Edlin).

Edlin, H. L. *Woodland Crafts in Britain*, Batsford Ltd. London, 1949.

Woods, K. S. — *Rural Crafts of England* — Harpur and Company, 1949.

Hartley, Dorothy, *Made in England*, Methuen and Company Ltd., London, 1951.

THE LOWLY RAKE

(Continued from Page 16)

To meet this situation the Tyringham company experimented with aluminum for bows until a composition was found that would not break, flatten or rust. This came to replace the hickory bows. Other special features as advertised were: the bend in the handle near the head to insure the right "pitch" to the teeth; the kiln-dried shouldered teeth driven into the green head needed no nailing, but gave added protection from breakage as well as simplifying replacement; handle shaped, larger at the point of greatest strain.

A quotation sheet of 1935 shows the variations in rakes: 24 or 28 teeth, 3 bows, lawn rakes; 12 or 14 teeth, 2 bows, 6' bent handles, hay rakes; 28 teeth, 2 bows, 6' straight handle Green Dip Lawn Rakes; 20 teeth, short head, 2 bows, 5' straight handle Junior Lawn rakes; Stedman Improved Lawn rakes, drag rakes. In the best grades handles were waxed and bagged, heads varnished. At one time a ten tooth rake was used for grading onions on the farms in the Connecticut River valley.

Marshall Stedman received much publicity through his presentation of rakes to six presidents of the United States, namely — T. Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover and Wilson. Each president acknowledged the gift with a note.

Neighbors, friends and customers gave Marshall Stedman a rousing celebration in 1927, commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of Stedman rake making, it being the longest established rake factory in the United States. Many kind words were said that day, always using the theme, honor and integrity. It was said, "A true Yankee judges a man by how well he does his job

(Continued on Page 20)

The Chronicle

The Chronicle

Early American
Industries Association, Inc.

The purpose of the association is to encourage the study and better understanding of early American industry, in the home, in the shop, on the farm, and on the sea, and especially to discover, identify, classify, preserve and exhibit obsolete tools, implements, utensils, instruments, vehicles, appliances and mechanical devices used by American craftsmen, farmers, housewives, mariners, professional men, and other workers.

FRED C. SABIN, *President*

Little Falls, New York

LORING McMILLEN, *Vice-President*

Staten Island Historical Society
Richmond, Staten Island, New York

GEORGE M. SIMMONS, *Vice-President*

Richmondville, N. Y.

M. W. THOMAS, JR., *Vice-President*
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan

LAWRENCE COOK, *Vice-President*
436 Webster Street, Needham, Mass.

MISS DOROTHY C. BARCK, *Secretary*
Farmers' Museum Library
Cooperstown, New York

MRS. FRANK D. PEIRCE, *Treasurer*
51 Paxton Street, Leicester, Mass.

JOSEPH W. RAKE, *Membership Chairman*
161 Broadway, Newburgh, N. Y.

W. D. GEIGER - RAYMOND TOWNSEND
Editors of The Chronicle
Williamsburg, Virginia

Editorial Advisory Board

MISS JANET R. MACFARLANE Albany, N. Y.

LORING McMILLEN Richmond, Staten Island, N. Y.

LAWRENCE B. ROMAINE Middleboro, Mass.

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON American Antiquarian Society
Worcester, Mass.

Communications regarding the contents of *The Chronicle* and back issues should be addressed to the Editors; suggestions for members to Joseph W. Rake; all other matters to the President. Address as here given.

DUES

The annual dues are payable on January 1st and are \$5.00. The *Chronicle* is published quarterly and is sent to all members without additional charge. Printed on the press of the *Virginia Gazette*, founded 1736, Williamsburg, Virginia.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

(Continued from Page 17)

the year of 1957-58 an outstanding one for the Early American Industries Association. In closing I would add also that Mr. Edward Durell, a past President of the Early American Industries Association, of Columbus, Ohio has been appointed chairman of the Meeting Committee. He will succeed Mr. Geiger of Williamsburg. It will be Mr. Durell's responsibility to see that he and his committee develop well in advance for us appropriate meeting sites. The spring meeting in 1958 has been tentatively set for Doylestown, Pennsylvania. I believe that this will also be an outstanding site for a meeting. Mr. Durell will also work closely with the Winston Salem people in order to insure an outstanding fall meeting for 1957. I wish to extend my warmest greetings to each member of the Early American Industries Association and hope that I may have the pleasure to meet you all in Winston Salem on October 5, 6 and 7, 1957.

Fred C. Sabin, President
Early American Industries Association

THE LOWLY RAKE

(Continued from Page 19)

whatever it may be". These men were "true Yankees".

The name "Stedman" was a trade-mark, part and parcel of its heritage. But the romantic hand-work shop with its slow moving lathes and oscillating planer and shaper, powered from the waters of the valley stream, are succeeded by a modern wood-working factory with automatic machines powered by a three phase electric service. All the intricate features of the "gay-ninety" rake are now streamlined into two styles only, to meet a constantly declining market. New names and faces, new products keep pace with our 20th century progress. Only the trade-name "Stedman" remains unchanged.

COMMENDATION

The Early American Industries Association through its official publication, *The Chronicle*, wishes to extend its warmest regards to its past president, Mr. Robert Hill, of Poughkeepsie, New York. Without his efforts during the year of 1956-57 it would have been impossible for the Early American Industries Association to make the progress which is evident to all. Mr. Hill was largely responsible for the development of the two excellent meetings of the past year, the one at Columbus, and the one at Corning. These two meetings and the development of a firm and sound Whatsit program with the able assistance of Mr. Miner J. Cooper are indeed accomplishments of which the Association can be proud. At the same time the Early American Industries Association wishes to congratulate its new president, Dr. Fred C. Sabin of Little Falls, New York. We are all confident that Dr. Sabin will provide the continued leadership necessary to make our Association outstanding.

The EAIA wishes also to thank Mr. John P. Fox and the Corning Glass Center for the fine spring meeting.

Early American Industries WHATSIT REPORT

Page 21

BY MINER J. COOPER
CHAIRMAN WHATSIT COMMITTEE

[Editor's Note.] In the Summer of 1954 a number of members of the early American Industries Association indicated their dissatisfaction with the Whatsit Program being carried on by the Association at its meetings. The major criticism stemmed from the fact that these persons concerned with the value of such a program, felt that it had become a game rather than an objective approach to the challenge of actually identifying and classifying the tools and implements of early America. The President of the Association at that time was Mr. Edward Durell of Columbus, Ohio, and he with the support of the Directors undertook the project of reorienting the Association's approach to this problem. As a result, the Whatsit Committee of the Association was appointed and headed by Mr. Miner J. Cooper of Windsor, New York. Mr. Cooper has now prepared his report on what our program is to be in the future. The Editors of *The Chronicle* at the direction of the Officers of the Association are presenting this report in its entirety in this issue of *The Chronicle* so that the membership can understand the importance of this work and the challenge and hard work that each of us must be willing to undertake in order to insure the success of the program.

The report is in three parts; the first section is directed to the President, the second, to the members, and the third establishes a new Committee, the Patent Information Committee. The report follows.]

TO THE PRESIDENT:

The following evaluation and recommendations will acquaint you, and all other E.A.I.A. members, with the Whatsit situation in full.

I have been attempting to do something about the Whatsit problem since the summer of 1954, and am very much disappointed with the progress to date. It seems incredible that it has taken this much time to get a true picture of the situation — and so little accomplished in putting any workable plan into action. However, this may be explained by the confusion and misunderstandings surrounding the entire operation. There are so many conflicting ideas and misconceptions, and plans have so often been thwarted by situations beyond our control.

The two most important things to first consider are: Do we want to progress, or do we want to stay in the rut in which we are now?

If we want to progress, I think that the half dozen Directors, who are most concerned with the outcome of this activity and among the ones closest to the aims of the Association, should join in a concerted effort to agree on a definite policy and program, and see that it is carried out in the shortest possible time. This is an absolute must. One man's efforts are futile without full cooperation.

If we want to stay in the rut and just have some fun with only negligible results, we might better forget everything and go back where we started. It certainly would be a lot less work. I abhor work when results are so poor.

There are five major factors contributing to the present confusion:

1. Time: Insufficient and/or improperly utilized.
2. Excessive number of items: Improper elimination.
3. Procedure: Insufficiently completed — Misdirected action.
4. Uncontrollable conditions: Poor exhibition space — Failure of Committee and/or Sponsoring Organization — Absence of properly coordinated directions — Misunderstandings.

5. Misconception of Whatsit meaning: Definition misunderstood — Confusion with game or contest.

I believe the solution is:

1. Time: Reapportioned — Coordinated action.
2. (Excessive number of items) Coordinated and concerted.
3. (Procedure:) action. — Effective elimination.
 - A. Rejection of items known to owner.
 - B. Rejection of items with patent markings.
 - C. Elimination of pre-identified items.
(From Whatsit Recordings — to be developed.)

The following by concerted action of above Directors and regular Committee:

- D. Pre-elimination of items before the table session.
 - E. Evaluation of conclusions drawn at table session, and elimination of items identified.
(Immediately following table session.)
 - F. Elimination at a final session.
(Immediately following above evaluation preferred.)
 - G. Elimination by "Chain Letter" Circuit.
(To be developed.)
4. Uncontrollable conditions:
 - A. Confirmation from Sponsoring Organization that suitable exhibition space is available.
 1. Otherwise adapting program to unsuitable conditions and locations.
 - B. Pre-survey of exhibition space.
 - C. Coordination of time units with regular program.
 - D. Complete reorganization of instructions and procedures.
 1. Separate, detailed directions for each phase of the operation, and for each person or committee involved.
 2. All notices, instructions and procedures to be completely coordinated.
 - E. Carefully directed and controlled action.

5. Misconception of Whatsit meaning: Effective publicity. (Whatsit defined: An *unknown* object.)

I sincerely believe the steps outlined above, some of which are covered in detail in the following report to all members, provide a good foundation for bringing the situation to a generally satisfying level.

TO ALL MEMBERS

The increasing number of Whatsits brought to our meetings for identification is a gratifying response to the

The Chronicle

publicity given this program during the past few years. A few of us, who are closely in touch with developments, can see the handwriting on the wall, and are convinced that, as time goes on, our Association will be recognized by *all* institutions and collectors as the prime source for authentic identification and information on the materials within our field of interest. This is particularly true with respect to the unknown objects we officially call Whatsits. However, if we are to reach this goal, we must adhere to a policy designed to effect it, and eliminate those features detrimental to its accomplishment.

Believing the identification of Whatsits to be the most important purpose of our Association, and the conduct of the process of identification of paramount importance — the Whatsit Committee is attempting to lay a firm foundation by which the administration of this branch of our activities can be achieved effectively, with the least hardship on any single member. In due time the many problems confronting us will be resolved. This is not a thankless task, as each of us will enjoy the satisfaction of having a part in elevating this most important purpose of our Association to its proper level.

The problem of major importance presently being worked on is the handling of Whatsits at the meetings. This must be done in such a way that *all* of them receive the attention they deserve and, most important, that those remaining unidentified after an initial survey by the group be given the full treatment of concentrated effort by all who are interested, and especially by those having had plenty of past experience with this type of material. It is disappointing to the Committee, and the owners, when these objects have to be left because we were unable to properly control our efforts.

So far, we have done a very poor job. Of the Whatsits brought to the last three meetings, according to my estimates, about one third were immediately identified, and another third satisfactorily identified by a group survey, leaving the last "difficult" third insufficiently worked over to produce the results we are capable of obtaining. However, at two meetings, where it was possible to direct more effort toward this "difficult" material it, in turn, was reduced by nearly one third; and I am convinced we could have done better given more time.

Even though some features of the entertainment angle must be sacrificed, I feel we are justified in so doing because this "difficult" remainder is the truly important material. The identification of Whatsits is not a contest, or just a game, but a serious business which should be given our united, concentrated effort. Somehow, I fail to see the merit, in this particular activity, of puzzling over identified objects when an unknown one is equally mystifying to the viewer, be he an experienced collector or a neophyte. If we are to function properly, the easy ones should be eliminated as quickly as possible, allowing us to spend the *major* portion of our time on the remainder. Our objective is otherwise completely defeated.

In order to achieve this end the Committee will reject all items on which the owner already knows the name and use. (More about this later.) These items are *not* Whatsits — unless in the estimation of the Committee the owner is incorrect. The Committee will eliminate all Whatsits identified during the preview period, and also those identified at the general assembly, or

"round table" session. These objects will be properly labeled and placed on the "Identified" table, and should prove a source of interest and education to everyone.

It is sincerely hoped that our efforts can be so organized that the meager time available will be utilized to the very best advantage. The remaining items will then be given a working over that will be a credit to the Association — in fact, the type of job that should be expected of us. Then, and not until then, will I feel we are producing our best.

Urgently needed is an adequate recording system for photos and details of Whatsits in order to avoid duplication of effort. At nearly every meeting, Whatsits identical to those previously shown and positively identified are often puzzled over needlessly, when a quick reference to the record would supply all the pertinent information. Owners have been asked to bring previously unidentified Whatsits to another meeting for reconsideration, and the record would be valuable in reviewing what, if anything, had been determined before.

The Committee will be grateful for any ideas or recommendations concerning this recording system. The following features are of prime importance: 1. The system should be in duplicate (possibly in triplicate) — one file for the Editors of the Chronicle, and one for the Committee member in charge of photographing and recording (the third perhaps for the Whatsit Chairman.) 2. It must be compact and easy to transport to the meetings. 3. It must be simple so that almost anyone can get the desired information. 4. There should be two parts — one for identified Whatsits, the other for unidentified ones. 5. Each part should be broken down into several classifications — such as: Household, Agricultural, Craft or Trade, Miscellaneous, etc. 6. Details of the Whatsit should be recorded with the photo, and be either a part of, or adjacent to it; and space should be provided for additional details. 7. Each Whatsit record unit should be interchangeable from one file to the other in the event of identification, or a rejection of a previous identification. 8. The initial setup should take into consideration the future need for expansion.

To eliminate unnecessary investigations, members are urged to carefully look over their Whatsits for patent markings. If any are found, do not bring the object to a meeting as a Whatsit, but apply directly to the Patent Information Committee for the desired information. If additional details are still desired after obtaining this information, they may be brought to the display area and placed on the "Information Wanted" table.

A sort of Whatsit "Chain Letter" will be organized shortly, to be circulated among a group of "dyed-in-the-wool" "Whatsiteers" and directed, as occasion demands, to other sources of probable information. All photos and details of Whatsits unidentified at a meeting will go the rounds before being submitted for publication in the Chronicle. It may also be advisable to include in this circuit a portion of the requests directed by mail to our organization, or its individual members, from outside sources.

Until the foregoing features can be developed to satisfactory working capacity, the Committee believes it advisable to limit the number of photos taken to those considered most important.

(Continued on Page 23)

FALL MEETING

The fall meeting of the Early American Industries Association will take place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday October 5, 6, and 7 at Winston Salem, North Carolina, with Old Salem, Incorporated serving as the host organization. Mr. Edward Durell of Columbus, Ohio, Chairman of the Meeting Committee will assist the Executive Director of Old Salem, Incorporated, Mr. Robert R. Garvey, Jr. with the plans for the meeting.

Old Salem located in the heart of Winston Salem, North Carolina was originally a Moravian Village settled in 1776. It is now being preserved, restored, and exhibited as a historic site by Old Salem, Inc. Old Salem today straddles busy South Main Street in the industrial part of Winston Salem and is a unique survival of an early American planned community. It is approximately sixteen city blocks in size and was founded as the religious, cultural, and industrial center of the Moravian settlement of Wachovia in North Carolina. It has been protected since its founding by the very nature of the town. The site of Old Salem is near the center of the Wachovia tract of 100,000 acres obtained from Lord Granville for a Moravian settlement in the 18th century. This area was temporarily settled in 1753 at Bethabara, 7 miles north of Salem, and the village from which the city of Winston Salem was developed was established 13 years later on ground sloping gently to the South and fed by several springs.

This unusual restoration and preservation project includes a number of fine old landmarks such as the Home Moravian Church, 1800; the Sisters House, 1786; the Brothers House, 1769 and 1786; The Christoph, John and Timothy Vogler Houses of 1797, 1819, and 1832; The Boy's School, 1794; The First Girl's Boarding School, 1804; The Inspector's House, 1811; The Lict-Boner House, 1787; The Community Store, 1775; The Anna Catharina House, 1772; The Salem Tavern, 1784; and many other interesting examples of this period. Forty of the first sixty buildings in the Village are still standing and used today including ten or twelve important public building constructed before 1811.

Salem is significant as one of the Historic Cities of America because it was a pioneering establishment 200 miles inland, far from a navigable river or existing road. Everything needed to build homes and shops, schools and places of worship, was devised, developed and put in place from natural resources and raw materials of the area, except for glass and some hardware which was brought from Europe. The everyday requirements of life and the prerequisite necessities including cooking utensils, candle molds, harness, tools and implements, guns, powder, clothing, shoes, and other requirements were made largely by craftsmen of the early Moravian Village. Many of their tools and implements survived and are on exhibit to the public.

The restoration of those fragments of early Salem which have disappeared and many buildings still standing and in use, was undertaken under the leadership of Old Salem, Incorporated, the legal name of the non-profit educational organization established by local citizens in 1950 and with the support of many community groups. An active program of restoration was begun by Old Sa-

lem, Incorporated in 1953 and several village buildings have been returned to their early appearance. Three of these are now open to the public as exhibition buildings. These include the Boy's School, which is now the home of the Wachovia Museum which contains one of the largest and most complete collection of local antiquities in the nation, the John Vogler House, the large pretentious home of the village silversmith and clockmaker, and the Lict-Boner House, an early log dwelling.

With such historical assets as these, there can be little question that our fall meeting at Salem can only be one of outstanding success. Old Salem is located in Winston Salem, North Carolina, a modern city of approximately 88,000 people. Winston Salem is located on the Piedmont Plateau in northwestern North Carolina, about 42 miles south of the Virginia State line and east of the main Blue Ridge Mountains. It is 540 miles from New York and approximately 312 from Washington. It is serviced by a modern air line, railways, and offers ample overnight facilities for a group such as the Early American Industries Association.

In the near future the membership of the Early American Industries Association will contain a complete story with photographs on this historic setting for our fall meeting. Please remember that it is only through good attendance that the Early American Industries Association can hope to sustain its program of providing two meetings a year.

WHATSIT REPORT

(Continued from Page 22)

The guessing contest has been discontinued because it defeats our objective, and contributes no real service. This is *identified* material, and has no connection with Whatsits which are *unknown* items. Join the "Whatsits" and help us solve some real riddles.

Please do not conclude from the foregoing that we are not going to have some real fun, or that we do not want you to bring *all* the Whatsits you have. A Whatsit is *always* important, especially to the owner, regardless of its age or type. Some of our members who collect objects of a later period are equally perplexed over their unknowns, and have an equal right to our consideration.

Because an owner doesn't know an object's name or use, is no reason for him to feel embarrassed about bringing it, nor should a person attending a session be embarrassed in offering a suggestion. A Whatsit can be identified only by the person who knows what it is, experience to the contrary — or by a process of gathering suggestions when an object is difficult to identify. Experience is helpful in determining the practicality of suggestions, and in assisting to promote them, but is often helpless without an important clue. We all have a mine of hidden information which can be tapped under the proper conditions, and it is the office of the Whatsit Committee to direct these conditions.

My sincere thanks to all who have aided in this project with personal assistance, suggestions and criticism. I also wish to thank the members of the Whatsit Committee, and especially Edward Durell, who developed the "round table" session.

(Continued on Page 24)

THE INDIAN BROOM

(Continued from Page 14)

place. Eight years ago a disaster befell him as it was necessary to remove the greater part of his stomach and that this and his advanced age made him unfit for manual labor".

Andrew J. Yorks comes of sturdy stock. His father lived to be 101 and his grandfather was an emigrant from Scotland to Ulster County and also lived to be very old. Andrew remembered the split brooms that his father and grandfather made years ago.

Andrew sharpened his jack-knife and started to make an Indian broom. He demonstrated with a stick of birch sapling as shown in the picture. This stick he gave to me as we were leaving. About eight inches up from the larger end of the stick, he cut a band two inches wide and then the bark was removed below the band and with his sharp jack-knife he started whittling thin splinters up to the two inch band. When he had whittled all that he could, he cut out the small core that was left, and then removed the bark above the band and started whittling downward, stopping when the stick was whittled down to handle size. The last whittled splinters, which should be longer, were then tied down tight over the lower splinters with a stout piece of cord. Then the splinters were trimmed off even and the handle was whittled down to size. The handle can be left with the marks of the knife showing but Andrew smoothed his handles with a piece of glass.

Andrew's brooms are smaller than the old fashioned Indian broom but even so, he finds that it is an all day job to make one broom.

The wood has to be green and he prefers birch. The splinters come up easy and the handles are not apt to warp when the wood is seasoning. If it does warp, the birch can be straightened with clamps. Andrew said that at times it is difficult to find straight saplings and at times he has to put clamps on the newly made brooms to straighten out the natural bend in the stick.

Against one side of his shop were racked large slabs of elm. From these Andrew makes fine replicas of the old fashioned grain-scoops. He is proud, and justly so, of the "love seats" as he calls them. They resemble the old ox-cart seat. Again he uses the elm from which he strips the bark, and cuts it into strips for seats.

While visiting with this old gentleman you can see the type of man who pioneered the wilderness, cleared the land and helped to leave us our priceless American Heritage. Andrew comes of a stock who never learned how *not* to work.

Editors Note: [Your Editors on occasion have seen the type of broom referred to in this article by Mr. Johnson as a "Besom". In checking into the reliability of this classification, the Editors were somewhat disturbed to find that the term "Besom" is of English origin. On first glance this would seem to add a third theory as to the actual beginning of this early split type broom.

However in attempting to solve this problem we referred to Miss K. S. Woods Book, *Rural Crafts of England*, London, 1949 and found an interesting description of the Besom-maker. This short article seems to

clear up the question of the Besom, for this type of broom was manufactured from birch twigs selected by a broom picker and then bound on to a handle by using a device known as a broom horse. The brush of the broom is of birch twigs, but these are tied together and to the handle in the traditional manner rather than being cut or stripped from a single birch sapling. It is this bound birch broom that should be referred to as a Besom and not the split or "Injun" broom of this article.]

WHATSIT REPORT

(Continued from Page 23)

PATENT INFORMATION COMMITTEE

In order to eliminate unnecessary investigations during the Whatsit programs at meetings, all members are urged to carefully look over their Whatsits for patent markings. If any are found, do not bring the object to a meeting as a Whatsit, but apply directly to the Patent Information Committee for the desired information. If additional details are still desired, after obtaining this information, they may be brought to some future meeting and placed on the "Information Wanted" table in the display area.

The following members have agreed to perform this service:

Mr. Elwood J. Way
1608 20th Street, N. W.
Washington 9, D. C.

Mr. Jackson Taylor
3906 Jocelyn Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Arnold Miles
6152 31st Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Be sure to supply the following information:

1. Date of patent.
2. Patent number, if shown.
3. A sketch, photo, and/or description of the device is essential.
4. If a copy of patent is desired, enclose \$.25 stamps or coin.

There are various methods of bringing out faded, worn or filled markings. Some of those used successfully include: Rub with a cloth until surface dirt fills depressions. Rub with fine steel wool (if the resulting spot will not detract from the appearance of the device.) Wipe a Bon Ami paste over surface — when dry, carefully rub with a cloth. In some cases, white, or contrasting paint can be used, but should be wiped off surrounding surface after a few minutes, and before it sets. If surface is deeply pitted, the paste method is seldom effective, and is difficult to clean out afterward. Sometimes the value of an object is enhanced when a paint filling is left in the markings or designs. Occasionally, filled marks can be brushed out with a stiff fiber brush and show well with the proper angle of light. Sometimes a mark "reads" better upside down, or in a strong artificial light rather than in daylight. If direct light is ineffective, try standing in a shadow, reading toward the light.

f broom
a broom
a device
room is
to the
ing cut
s bound
om and

EE
is dur-
ers are
patent
ct to a
Patent
n. If
g this
eeting
n the
rform

vice
mps

led,
illy
res-
vill
e a
rub
int
ace
is
nd
ue
in
an
ll
rk
al
f-
t.